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ABSTRACT

Student teachers at Montana State University are exposed to the elementary techniques of mentoring and networking in the educational environment. This paper discusses the benefits of the program and explains the process of initiating an individual's own mentorship program. The paper lists attributes of a good mentor, offers advice on choosing a mentor, and notes rewards for being a mentor. The section on networking includes guidelines for building a network of people who can be of help in changing jobs or careers, improving job performance in the present career, or advancing in the present career. It is pointed out that the three vital parts to good networking are visibility, familiarity, and image. Suggestions are made on how to develop in these areas. (JD)

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MENTORING AND NETWORKING TECHNIQUES
USED IN MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY'S
TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

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Introduction

Many authorities and organizations believe that in the near future there will be a teacher shortage throughout the entire nation. We at Montana State University feel that despite the predicted shortage, it is still important for student teachers to be involved in and learn about the need for mentoring and networking in the educational environment. Each student teacher is exposed to the elementary techniques in both areas of mentoring and networking. The following will be a discussion of the benefits of the program, along with discussion about the process of initializing an individuals own mentorship program.

MENTORING

Role of the Mentor

The mentor is the person who is chosen by the student to help guide and direct their professional career. This includes anything from providing expertise to facilitating in the employment process. A mentor should possess the following attributes:

1. A mutual consent to take an active interest in the personal career development of another person.
2. Support for the person's dreams and help put them into effect.
3. One who is a mixture of a parent and peer.
4. One who actively guides and is a consultant and advisor.
5. One who becomes actively involved and may be used as role model.

6. One who is sincere, generous, compassionate, and concerned.
7. One who looks objectively at accomplishments and gives encouragement.
8. One who cuts red tape when politics are involved.
9. One who acts as a host and guide.
10. One who shares the the dream of the goal.
11. One who has influence and will use it to help.
12. One who knows the politics and will help politically.
13. One who opens career doors.
14. One who teaches.
15. One who is a true and loyal friend.

How to Get a Mentor

Students are new to the process of mentoring, so we instruct them to shoot for the moon and if you don't succeed you may land in the stars. Choosing a mentor is is an important decision effecting the student teachers career, so we equip them with the following guidelines to follow when selecting a mentor.

1. Ask your first choice. Do not be afraid to ask the best in field to be your mentor. The best are usually honored.
2. Introduce yourself and make the first contact in organizational meetings.
3. Begin by asking help in regards to strengths and weaknesses.
4. Always follow up help with a thank-you note, personally hand written.
5. Volunteer to help your mentor so it isn't a one-way street.
6. Try to become efficient in some area your mentor has weaknesses.

7. Ask a colleague to mention your work to your mentor.
8. Seek mentors in your institution and other institutions.
9. Volunteer to serve on task-forces, committees, or projects within your organization.
10. Invite your potential mentor to be a guest lecturer or volunteer help whenever possible.
11. Whenever possible, suggest your mentor for their expertise, both for volunteer work and professional compensation work.
12. Hire a mentor whenever possible.

Rewards for being a Mentor

The mentorship program does not benefit only the student teachers. It is important that potential mentors realize that there are rewards for mentoring someone in their careers. Mentors realize that by guiding a young teacher in their career they will benefit in many ways; just a few are mentioned below:

1. It helps your self-esteem to be chosen as a mentor.
2. It makes you learn how to work with others.
3. It helps develop your leadership skills.
4. It makes you feel important and needed.
5. It keeps you on the "cutting edge" of your profession.
6. It makes you develop "risk taking" behaviors.
7. It helps you develop universal communication skills.
8. It gives you prestige within you organization.
9. It makes you set higher standards for yourself.
10. It makes you become a good listener.
11. It makes you gain respect from others.

12. It forces you to look into the political aspects of organizations.

Selection of Mentors

Often the question arises "Where do I look for possible mentors?". We instruct the students to look for people who have more authority than they do, in or out of the education field. Respected people in other areas of their lives could also provide the guidance and leadership that is needed in a good mentor.

NETWORKING

Where to Network

The key to networking is building a wide range of relationships. Networking is a two-way street. Be willing to help others and they will help you. Try to enlarge and expand your network while in the field working. Do not be shy to make contacts when the situation provides for it. Make a list of people that you consider would help you in the following areas:

1. Changing jobs or careers.
2. Helping you do a better job in your present career.
3. Helping you advance in your present career.

Once this list is made, the networker then needs to reflect and ask the following questions to gain the most networking power.

1. In which of the areas above am I networking most successfully?
2. In which of the areas do I need improvement, and how can I go about improving?

When students are making their list of people to network with we suggest that they look in a multitude of places for their contacts including:

1. Workplace
2. Conventions
3. Social Organizations
4. Church
5. Friends

Vital Parts to Networking

We think there are three vital parts to good networking. These are visibility, familiarity, and image. The students are directed to develop these three areas in their networking process. We provide the following suggestions to help them begin to establish a network.

Visibility-- you must see and be seen. Visit with everyone at the organizational meetings.

1. Exchange business cards.
2. Circulate within parties.
3. Introduce yourself to all members.

Familiarity--

1. Show an interest in all people in your organization.
2. Do favors for your co-workers.
3. Master small-talk, talk about anything that interests the other party.

4. Understand that every person in the organization needs to be wanted. Sincerely listen and talk to all members of the organization.

Image

1. Decide who you are at work.
2. Speak to everyone.
3. Participate in what is happening around you.
4. Be interested in people and they will be interested in you.
5. Do favors whenever necessary.
6. Extend yourself.
7. Never underestimate the power of simple courtesy.
8. Make yourself approachable.
9. Give strokes when strokes are due.
10. Maintain a positive outlook.

Conclusion

After the students have finished all of the previous commitments and answered the question to the best of their ability, we know they definitely have an advantage over the average candidate. They will have more success in their first interview, and have a better chance at receiving their contract for their first year of teaching.

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